

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Representative Chet Edwards today supported H.R. 4626, the Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act, which passed the House by a strong bipartisan vote of 406 to 19. The bill repeals the 65 year old exemption that health insurance companies have had from federal anti-trust laws and holds them accountable for price fixing, exercising monopoly power, and unfair practices that have led to higher prices for consumers, a lower quality of coverage and limited choices.

**Congressman Chet Edwards said,** *“Competition is the engine that drives our economy, spurs innovation and ensures that American families receive a fair deal.□ This bill promotes more competition in the private health insurance market, which should lead to lower health care prices for families and businesses.”*

A report commissioned by the Bush Administration in 2007 recommended that this antitrust exemption be eliminated. The Bush Administration’s commission stated that this antitrust exemption has

*“lived any utility it may have had and should be repealed.”*

□

In 2007, the National Association of Attorneys General – representing both Democratic and Republican State Attorneys General –overwhelmingly adopted a resolution calling for repeal of this exemption. As the resolution pointed out, *“the National Association of Attorneys General consistently has opposed legislation that weakens antitrust standards for specific industries because there is no evidence that such exemptions promote competition or serve the public interest.”*

Also, in a recent letter to Congress, nine State Attorneys General pointed out, *“Since 1977, and most recently in 2007, antitrust experts and enforcers have concluded that repealing the McCarran-Ferguson exemption would result in enhancing competition while allowing standard industry practices necessary for the proper functioning of these markets, such as sharing loss and other insured risk information.”*

□

**Edwards concluded,** *“Health insurance companies are an important part of our private health care system, but they should have to play by the same anti-trust rules as virtually all other commercial businesses.”*

Edwards represents District 17 in Congress.